

I N F A N C Y.

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P O E M.

A N E W E D I T I O N.

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P O E M.

BOOK THE FIRST.

By HUGH DOWNMAN, M. D.

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A NEW EDITION.

L O N D O N:

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THE ANCY

OF THE

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I N F A N C Y.

P O E M.

BOOK THE FIRST.

O DAUGHTER of Divine Philosophy!

Not Him of Aspect stern, and Brow severe,

Whose gloomy metaphysic Eye, inwrapt

In Darknefs, never deigns a chearfull Smile

To dissipate the Gloom: But Him who leads

Instruction by the Graces drest; attend.

Though barren be the Subject, thou can'st give

The Bard to please: With me then turn thine Eyes

B

On

On the prime Infant-state of helpless Man:

On the first Dawn of Life, when Nature now

10

Ushers her tender Offspring into Day;

Observe the young Ideas how they wake

In gradual Order, till at length matur'd

By Time, they speak a living Soul within.

View too the transient Flash of Mirth; the Ills

Not real, yet agonizing; ye quick Thought

Forever varying, glanc'd from Toy to Toy.

Then constant Motion pleases, then the Ear

Catches at every Sound, the Eye untir'd

Darts its wild Ray, and every Object thrills

20

The new-born Soul with Joy. Come Virgin, teach

How on the Management of these first Years

Depends the future Man; the Theme not mean,

Not uselefs, if thy Aid be not refus'd.

WE write to Reason: Hence ye doating Train

Of Midwives, and of Nurses ignorant,

Old Beldames grey, in Error positive,

And stiff in Prejudice, whose fatal Care

Oft Death attends, or a Life worse than Death.

O YOUTH,

O YOUTH, whoe'er thou art, to Beauty's Charms 30
 A Slave, to th' inexpressive Loveliness
 Which native Modesty and Truth bestows
 On their more beauteous Minds, and which exalts
 Britannia's Daughters o'er the female World!
 Is thy Belov'd propitious? Doth the God
 Prepare his nuptial Torch? And dost thou wish
 The Name of Father, amiable, humane?
 To view thy little Progeny around
 Happy, well-form'd, and strong? Attend the Muse:
 Th' instructive Muse shall teach thee to obtain 40
 Thy Heart's Desire. And say wilt thou fair Nymph
 Not condescend with favourable Eye
 To read the modest-teaching Page? To thee
 Custom hath given, while active Life shall call
 Thy Husband forth amid its boist'rous Walks,
 Domestic Rule: Thine is among the Rest
 The Nursery's Charge, the most important Task
 Of all: What absence from his Eye may hide,
 Thy constant anxious Care shall well supply.

HEALTH is the greatest Blessing Man receives 50
 From bounteous Heaven, by her the smiling Hours
 Are wing'd with Transport; she too gives the Soul
 Of Firmness; without her the Hand of Toil
 Would languid sink; the Eye of Reason fade.

To this then bend thy Care, O Parent Mind;
 Array thy Child in Health; a nobler Dress
 Not gorgeous Majesty can boast; the Thanks
 Of future Gratitude thou wilt receive,
 More than if in his Lap thou then should'st pour,
 Profusely pour thy Gold; or give him all 60
 Thy Herds, and bleating Flocks, though Thousands range
 Thy spacious Meads, or cloath thy ample Hills.

WOULD'ST thou thy Children blest? Attend the Call
 Of beckoning Nature, follow where she leads
 Unerring Guide: No Labyrinth is here;
 No Clue of Ariadne wilt thou need—
 To Theseus given: Fair is her open Path,
 And strong the steady Light she throws around,
 Instinctive Light, the surest safest Guide.

THY Child is born. See, where the treacherous Nurse, 70
 Or she who o'er Lucina's Right presides
 Prepares the poisonous Drench: Forewarn'd, beware:
 Within the fatal Drug lurks Death; by this
 Thousands from yet untasted Life retire,
 Thousands of infant Souls; yet, sanctified
 By Custom, other Causes are assign'd,
 And Nature is accus'd of impious Deeds
 She ne'er committed. Nature will preserve
 Whate'er she frames: Is Physic needful then?
 She has remark'd it well, and taught the Child 80
 To seek its Remedy: e'er yet the Sun
 Hath from its Birth incircled Half the Sphere,
 It asks, plain as expressive Signs can ask,
 The Mother's Breast: Without a Moment's pause
 Hear the mute Voice of Instinct, and obey.
 Know the first Efflux from each milky Fount
 Is Nature's chymic Mixture, which the Attempts
 Of bungling Art cannot supply, this flows
 Gently deterfive, purifying, bland;
 This each internal Obstacle removes, 90

And sets in motion the young Springs of Life.

Hence too the Mother is secure: The Streams

Health giving to her Infant, flow to her

Salubrious; otherwise confin'd, or driven

Back on the Blood, what hath she not to fear?

The raging Fever, from the fatal Cause

Holding its Name, Obstructions fierce, dire Pangs

Of Torture, future Cancers by the Juice

Of boasted Hemlock not to be remov'd.

O MOTHER, (let me by that tenderest Name

100

Conjure thee) still pursue the Task begun;

Nor unless urg'd by strong Necessity,

Some fated, some peculiar Circumstance,

By which thy Health may suffer, or thy Child

Suck in Disease, or that the genial Food

Too scanty flows, give to an Alien's Care

Thy orphan Babe. O, if by Choice thou dost---

What shall I call thee? Woman? No, though fair

Thy Face as one of the angelic Choir,

Though Sweetness seem pourtray'd in every Line

110

And

And Smiles which might become a Hebe, rise
 At Will, crisping thy rosy Cheeks, though all
 That's lovely, kind, attractive, elegant,
 Dwell in thy outward Shape, and catch the Eye
 Of gazing Rapture, all is but Deceit;
 The Form of Woman's thine, but not the Heart;
 Drest in Hypocrisy, and studied Guile
 This Act detects thee, shews thee to have lost
 Each tender Feeling, every gentler Grace,
 And Virtue more humane, more finely drawn
 And fet by yielding Nature in the Breast
 Of female Softness, to have driven forth these
 By force, to have unsex'd thy Mind, become
 The Seat of torpid dull Stupidity,
 Cold, and insensible to the warm Touch
 Of generous Emotions, lock'd up close
 To shut out Pity's Entrance, who retreats
 Repining from her heaven-destin'd Seat,
 Usurp'd by Cruelty, the worst of Fiends.

120

HADST thou been treated thus, thou ne'er perhaps
 Hadst liv'd, so barbarously from thy Sight

130

To

To send a Child of thine. O unblown Flower !
 Soft Bud of Spring ! Planted in foreign Soil
 How wilt thou prosper ! Brush'd by other Winds
 In a new Clime, and fed by other Dews
 Than fuit thy Nature ! From a stranger Hand
 Ah, what can Infancy expect, when she
 Who bore thee in her Womb so long, whose Life
 Whose Soul thou didst participate, neglects
 Herself in thee, and breaks the strongest Seal
 Which Nature stamp'd in vain upon her Heart.

140

O LUCKLESS Babe, born in an evil Hour,
 Who shall with watchful Eye thy thousand Wants
 Attend ? Explore with Care the latent Cause
 Giving Uneasiness ? Thy Slumbers guard ?
 And when awake, with nice Sedulity
 Observe thy every Turn. A Parent might.
 A venal Hireling cannot if she would :
 Though willing to perform her Duty well,
 She feels not in her Soul th' impulsive Goad
 Of Instinct, all the fond, the fearful Thoughts

150

Awakening :

Awakening : Say at length that Habits Power
 Can something like maternal Kindness give,
 Yet e'er that Time may the poor Nurfeling die.

BESIDES, who can assure the lacteal Springs
 Pure and untainted ? Oft Disorder lurks
 Beneath the sanguine Cheek, and chearful Eye
 Promising Health, and poisonous Juice secrete,
 Slow undermining Life, stains what should be
 The purest Nutriment. Hence, worse than Death, 160
 A Life of Misery to thy blasted Child.
 A Burthen to himself, by others shunn'd,
 He wishes for the Grave, and wastes his Days
 In solitary Woe ; or haply weds
 And propagates th' hereditary Plague,
 Entailing on himself the bitter Curse
 Of Generations yet unborn, a Race
 Pithless and weak, who live not half their Days.

BUT, whether lost in Pleasure, in the Round
 Of modish Life, and Dissipation gay, 170
 Misnam'd Polite, the Welfare of her Child

The fair Barbarian looks on with an Eye
 Distant and cold ; or imitating her,
 (As Faults of higher Station still will gain
 Followers in humbler Life) in vain the Muse
 Hath to the Mother's Ear, attun'd her Lay,
 In the World's middle Rank ; she shall not cease
 Desponding, stronger Arguments for them,
 More cogent, more compelling she can bring,
 To which perhaps self-interested Love 180
 Will ope their listening Sense. Of mental Joys
 To them we speak not. But if Health they prize,
 Nor wish the Fates to cut their vital Thread
 E'er they have gain'd their Prime ; Fear may effect
 What Instinct, Love, and Duty fail'd to do.
 And here no fabled Lays we bring, to strike
 With Superstitions dread the Mind, but Truth,
 Plain honest Truth, inspires the homely Song.

SHE who refuses to her young Ones Lip
 Her swelling Bosom, each returning Year 190
 Conceives, and each returning Year sustains

The

The Pangs of Child-birth. Harrafs'd by Fatigue
 The strongest Constitution fails, but soon
 The weaker System, like a blighted Flower,
 Falls underneath the Shock. The nursing Time
 Was meant by wisest Nature, as a Stay,
 A vacant Interspace, in which the Nerves,
 And Threads of Life unstrung, might re-assume
 Their native Tone, endued again with Strength,
 And corresponding Vigour, to support 200
 The Day of Toil : As a sure Medicine,
 To root out many an Illness, else untam'd,
 From the soft female Frame : T' invigorate
 The fragile Texture, and with grateful Force
 Brace up the Fibres morbid, and relax'd.
 But if not e'en these Motives can persuade,
 T' inspire her Charms, new Beauties to acquire,
 Is Woman's utmost Wish: View then the Fair,
 Who to this sweet Employment turns her Mind !
 Delighted Health sits on her polish'd Brow, 210
 And shews the Veins beneath : Spreads o'er her Cheeks
 The vermil Glow : her Eyes with Lustre fills ;

Decks her with radiant Smiles, and all her Form
 With Grace ineffable, and Comeliness
 Invests. Enough of these---The Muse beholds
 With Rapture some of other Kind---O, hail
 Ye real Mothers! Ye whose Hearts are full
 Of Sensibility! Who highly pleas'd
 Would not for all the Gewgaws Pride can boast
 Loosen the magic Knot, which joins in one 220
 Your B2bes and you; or see a Hireling share
 The Love, which to a Mother sole is due.
 O Thou, to whom one of this pious Train
 I bend with Veneration and Respect!
 Let me attend thee, (nor thou fear a Spy)
 To thy domestic Haunts, where Peace expands
 Her Wings, and Harmony delighted dwells.
 Let me behold thee, rivet thy fix'd Eye
 On the young infant Form, then press it close,
 Close to thy throbbing Heart, then on its Lips 230
 A thousand Kisses print, thy Eyes with Joy
 O'erflowing, in each Feature tracing out
 The fancied Likeness of its much-lov'd Sire.

And

nAd lo, where pleas'd, beyond Expression pleas'd,

To see thee in the loveliest Task employ'd

Of female Duty, where thy Husband hangs

Enamour'd o'er thy fostering Breast; the Night

Which gave thee to his Arms, gave not a Joy

To this superiour, piercing to the Soul,

Sincere, and home-felt. O true Name of Love,

240

Tender Affection! Genuine Source of Bliss,

Immaculate, and pure! The transient Blaze

Of Lust soon fades; thy unabated Fire

Time but increases! Soft coercive Band

Connecting Souls! Without thee, what is Life!

Sweet Halcyon of the Breast, whose Summer Wing

Lulls each tempestuous Care! To thee the Wife,

The Good still sacrifice; the Soul refin'd

From vulgar Dross; nor any but the Dull,

Whom Nature niggard of her Bounty cast

250

In narrow Mould, or whom with Iron Hand

Tyrannic Custom rules, despise thy Sway.

E

THRICE

THRICE happy she, by Inclination led,
 By nought with-held, to add this pleasing Link,
 This heart-endearing Bond, to the sweet Tyes
 Of married Love ! But should'st thou e'er be doom'd
 Votarefs of Truth and Virtue, to forego
 The Impulſes by their eternal Hands
 Implanted ; to forego the honeſt Call
 Of Duty and Deſire ; condemn'd by Ails 260
 From Cauſes unforeſeen to tear the Pledge
 From thy fond Boſom ; while thy ſickening Heart
 Bleeds at the Thought, condemn'd to render up
 Unto another's Care the Babe thy Love,
 Beyond Expreſſion, doats on : Let my Lays
 Direct thy Choice for the momentous Taſk
 Whom to employ, what Mother to adopt
 For thy unconſcious young One, for from her
 Not only Nutriment perhaps he takes
 To Life and Growth ſubſervient, but who knows 270
 How far the Stamina yet unevolv'd,
 How far the Soul herſelf as yet unform'd,
 For Texture, Vigour, Paſſions, Intellect,

On this thy Act depend? Far from the Bounds
 Of the rank City, let some trusty Friend
 Explore the Straw-built Cott; there, firm of Nerve
 Her Blood from every grosser Particle
 By hardy Labour and abstemious Fare
 Sublim'd; the honest Peasant's Mate shall ope
 Her hospitable Arms, receive with Joy 280
 The infant Stranger, and profusely yield
 Her pure balsamic Nurture to his Lip.

But since the keenest Eye may be deceiv'd,
 And Vice will lurk amid the country Haunts
 To Innocence devoted, it were meet
 T' investigate among the Village Tribe
 Their Neighbour's Mode of Life. Heeds she the Laws
 Of matron-like Sobriety? No Sot?
 No tattling Gossip? Or vexatious Scold?
 Does no Suspicion light upon her Frame? 290
 To Wedlock true? Feels she a Parent's Love?
 To her own Offspring tenderly benign?
 Does she her Husband's constant Heart possess?
 Nor seeks he foreign Pleasure? Satisfied

In these Inquiries, still 'twere right not thus
 To terminate thy Search; survey around
 Her little Mansion, see if there in spite
 Of Poverty, the Step of Cleanliness,
 Attractive Nymph, hath not disdain'd to tread.
 The Choice of Age neglect not; from her Cheek 300
 Let not the Hand of Time have chac'd away
 The Bloom of Youth, nor be she green in Years.
 For torpid, or impar'd by frequent Use,
 The flexile Vessels, which convolv'd in Maze
 Wrapp'd within Maze, secrete the purer Stream,
 Their Office will more sparingly perform,
 Or less nutritious Particles supply.
 And if thy Nurse be young, the thoughtful Mind
 Of Prudence, would not to her Charge confide
 What claims exactest Affiduity 310
 And serious Vigilance. There are who think
 Too subtile in their Theory, the Nurse
 Should with the Mother aptly coincide
 In Age and Temperament; but heeding well
 The Precepts we have given, thou may'st neglect

Such

Such trivial Niceness; Health from each extreme
 Remov'd, is not to Colour of the Hair,
 Or to Complexion ting'd with red or brown
 Confin'd: Excess thou should'st indeed avoid
 Of Plump or Lean, nor would I choose th' adust 320
 And highly bilious, or the sable Hue
 Of clouded Melancholy. Be it then
 Thy chiefest Care to fix on vigorous Health
 Array'd in Smiles, the lovely Progeny
 Of constant Chearfulness, and sweet Content.
 Nor would I (though confess a Quality
 Inferior in its Kind) not prize the Voice
 From Harshness free, whose soft Tone can compose
 The froward Babe, or gently bid it wake,
 And view the young-eyed Morn. O thou who help'st 330
 To throng the crouded Town, restrain'd by Force
 Within that Court of Death, where every Gale
 Is tainted with Pollution; did the Muse
 If some sad Cause forbade thee to pursue
 The Mother's genuine Office, to the Fields
 Serene, and rural Lares order forth

Thy tender Infant, not from needless Fears
 And vain Precaution, did she dare to thwart
 The Dictates of Humanity. She sees,
 What do not to thy Eye perhaps appear, 340
 The dreadful Train of Ills, which swarm within
 Th' unhallow'd Precincts. Well she knows how few
 Out of the many Myriads City-born
 Survive, in just Proportion scann'd with those
 Who bask in freer Day. Much can no doubt
 A Parent's warm and unabating Love,
 And hard it is to part. But can't thou purge
 Th' unwholesome Atmosphere, gravid with Seeds
 Of latent Sickness? Suffocation fell,
 Angina, apthous Sores, Eruptions dire, 350
 Pertussis fierce, and squalid Atrophy?
 Say, can't thou bid the flagging South speed by,
 Nor over his peculiar Mansion brood
 With darkening Plume, of Poision and of Death
 Prolific? When each Danger I review,
 By Heaven, I scarce would wish thee to attempt
 The Nurses' Task, though nought should intervene

Of fatal Accident, and thou art bound
By every Tye of Nature to the Deed.

For can'st thou round thy Infant's Brow entwine

360

A magic Wreath? Or cause an Angel lift

His shielding Arm? Thou can'st not: Follow then

The Precepts of Experience; yet let oft

Maternal Fondness guide thee to the Place

Where rests the little Sojourner, there view

How cherish'd, how improv'd, and lingering chide

The rapid Step of still-progressive Time

Which hurries thee reluctantly away.

BUT can the Mother change unblam'd the Town,

For some sequester'd Villa? What denies,

370

Her Bed of Sickness quitted, to retreat

And seek the Haunts, where Peace on Flowers reclin'd

Lifts to the warbling Songster of the Grove?

Or from the gently-rising Hill surveys

The grazing Herds, and Rivulet which winds

Meand'ring through the distant Vale? Where Health

Sports on the level Green, and young Delight

Smiling attends: Where bounteous Nature sheds

Her

Her choicest Blessings, and with guardian Wing
 Protects her favourite Progeny. Retire, 380
 My fair Disciple, haste to Scenes like these,
 And underneath thy Roof invite to dwell
 The Fosterer of thy Child. Despise with me
 The idiot Train of Vanity and Pride,
 The Foppery of Custom, quaint Parade
 Of ceremonial Visit, idle Farce
 Of Masquerade, or Ball where real Joy
 Ne'er enter'd, Conversations gayly dull
 Unblest by exil'd Friendship, Glare of Courts,
 And Mummery of the Great. Be't thine to walk 390
 With Reason, and enjoy th' harmonious Voice
 Of conscious Rectitude, whose soothing Strain
 Can lift the Soul beyond what vulgar Thought
 Can distantly imagine. If thou must
 Require another's Aid thy Place to fill,
 Her Conduct thou direct, and regulate
 The Manner of her Life, a Pleasure this
 Inferior, yet affording ample Room
 To gratify the finer Nerve of Love.

To see thy Substitute at stated Times
 The life-sustaining Food supply, to mark
 How thrives her young Dependent, and each Day
 Appears Addition manifest to gain
 In Size and Stature, while his Face beams forth
 At least to Fancy's peering Eye, the Dawn
 Of future Reason, and Intelligence.

400

HERE, as in all Things, Nature opens wide
 Her Page instructive. Did'st thou not behold
 How in her homely Dwelling, Health array'd
 With roseate Hue the Cheeks, and firmly strung
 The Muscles of her elder Boy thy Nurse
 Hath left behind? She was not surfeited
 With dainty Cates, and high luxurious Fare
 When him she suckled, never did a Draught
 Stronger than Water pass her thirsty Lip,
 Pernicious Ale she knew not. When releas'd
 From short Confinement, to her Wants no Friend,
 No menial Servant ministred, her Babe
 She fill'd, then gave up to the soft Embrace.

410

Of Sleep; mean while no sedentary Life 420

She led, she spun the Woof, in Order meet

She set her Cott, the Viands she prepar'd

With which at Even-tide to welcome Home

The Husband whom she lov'd: Or in her Arms

Bearing her grateful Burthen, out she hied,

Braving the Summer's Heat, or Winter's Cold,

And as she walk'd caroll'd th' incondite Lay

Of rustic Merriment. Seek not to change

Her usual Regimen, for if thou dost

Should she escape the Fever which impends, 430

Expect thy Child, attack'd by cholic Pangs,

To writhe in Torture, or perhaps at once

Convulsive Spasms shall snatch him from the World.

For now her Stomach, which from Diet hard

By Habit's Force, and potent Exercise

Elaborated Chyle of blindest Sort,

Oppress'd by Crudities, corrupts the Blood

With viscid Recrement. Or else the Brain,

That Source of Motion, urg'd by Sympathy,

Creates new Impulses of morbid Kind 440

The vital Threads affecting, and from thence

The salient Arteries, and ruddy Stream
 Within their Coats contain'd, the Glands from it
 Their various Store secreting, nor escapes
 Among the rest the lacteal Tide, the Food,
 By Nature of thy Child, but now his Bane.

O HABIT ! Powerful Ruler of Mankind,
 Great Principle of Action ! Reconcil'd
 By thee to every Clime, the human Race
 O'erspread this Globe, around the frozen Pole 450
 Scorn the stern Brow of Winter, nor beneath
 The Equinoctial dread the Ray intense
 Of scorching Phœbus ; thou presid'st well pleas'd
 O'er the innocuous vegetable Meal
 Which on the Banks of Ganges or of Ind
 Satiates the temperate Bramin. Thou can'st tame
 To wholesome Nourishment the sanguine Feast
 Of th' ever-roving Scythian. To thy Laws
 We subjugate the willing Neck, profess
 Thy Vassals ; nor the mental Faculties 460
 Dost thou not sway ; by thee inwrapt in Maze
 Of subtle politics the Statesman plans

His

His fraudulent Schemes unceasing. Thou sustain'st
 The Sage who labours for the public Good
 With patriot Care, though oftentimes assail'd
 By black Ingratitude. The midnight Lamp
 Of Meditation, trimm'd by thee, reveals
 To th' philosophic Eye Truth's awful Face,
 And all his Toil is Pleasure. Led by thee,
 The Bard retreats from Vice's noisy Reign,
 And in the secret Grot with Fancy holds
 Delicious Converse, while her Hand withdraws
 The Veil from Memory's ideal Store,
 And all th' associated Tribe of Thought
 Displays before his View. Still may I bend
 Before thy Shrine, O Habit, when thy Rules
 With Nature's disagree not, neither then
 May we unpunish'd break them, else in vain
 Shalt thou attempt to fasten round my Heart,
 For know, that Reason and her Sister Form,
 Fair Virtue, can untwist thy magic Cords,
 And to their Will, though not annihilate,
 Can all thy Laws attemper and refine.

END OF THE FIRST BOOK.